

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 760

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, MASS, MORG, PGOV, CO, US
SUBJECT: US-LA MILITARY RELATIONS- COLOMBIA

REF:77 STATE 306726

1. THE FOLLOWING IS IN REPOSE TO QUESTIONS POSED IN REFTTEL:
A. ALTHOUGH THE COLOMBIAN ARMED FORCES (CAF) ACCEPT A SUB-
ORDINATE ROLE IN COLOMBIAN SOCIETY, CONTINUED US TIES WITH
THE MILITARY ARE USEFUL IN MAINTAINING NORMAL RELATIONS WITH
THE GOC. US INFLUENCE IN COLOMBIA IS ENHANCED BY THE CAF'S
LENGHTY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US AND THEIR DEPENDENCE ON THE
US AS A MAJOR SOURCE OF EQUIPMENT AND FINANCIAL CREDITS.
THESE SAME CONSIDERATIONS ARE TRUE REGARDING RESPONSIVENESS
TO US SECURITY INTERESTS, PARTICULARLY AS THEY AFFECT THE
DEFENSE OF PANAMA CANAL, THE ACCEPTANCE BY THE GOC OF
A GREATER RESPONSIBILITY IN GUARANTEEING THE SECURITY OF THE
SEA LINES OF COMMUNICATION IN THE CANAL'S APPROACHES (STATE 295522);
AND REGIONAL SECURITY. THE DISCONTINUATION OR DIMINUTION OF
THIS MILITARY RELATIONSHIP COULD RESULT IN A GREATER STRAIN
ON THE COLOMBIAN BUDGET, INCREASED DIFFICULTY IN DEALING WITH
NATIONAL SECURITY PROBLEMS, AND/OR A GROWING THIRD COUNTRY
INFLUENCE IN COLOMBIA AT THE EXPENSE OF THE US.
B. OUR PRESENT RELATIONS WITH THE CAF ARE GOOD, DUE PRIMARILY
TO THE PRESENCE OF US MILITARY ASSISTANCE PERSONNEL, EMBASSY
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AND DAO CONTACTS, THE IMET PROGRAM, AND US FINANCIAL CREDITS.
THESE TIES ARE HIGHLY VALUED BY THE GOC WHICH RECOGNIZES ITS
MILITARY'S NEED FOR ASSISTANCE.
C. A GREATER US RECOGNITION OF VALID CAF MODERNIZATION RE-
QUIREMENTS, WITH A SUBSEQUENT INCREASE IN FMS CREDITS AND AN
EXPANDED IMET PROGRAM, WOULD BEST MEET OUR MUTUAL NEEDS IN THE
NEAR TO MID-TERM.

D. THE CAF WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SERVE THEIR MOST IMMEDIATE INTERESTS THROUGH US TIES IF US EQUIPMENT SALES WERE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED. THE GOC IS NOT LIKELY TO TURN TO THE US FOR ADVICE ON THIRD-COUNTRY EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES.

E. PERSONNEL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, LEADERSHIP GRANTS, ETC. CAN HELP MAINTAIN THE PRESENT FAVORABLE RELATIONSHIP AND PROVIDE FOR INCREASED US INFLUENCE IN THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY. SUCH PROGRAMS, HOWEVER, REMAIN SECONDARY IN IMPORTANCE TO CONTINUED US MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND PRESENCE, THE LATTER ESPECIALLY AT THE SENIOR LEVEL.

F. CURRENT TRENDS INDICATE A PREFERENCE FOR PROCUREMENT OF US MILITARY MATERIAL AND SERVICES. THIS IS CONTINGENT UPON THE CONTINUED AVAILABILITY OF FMS CREDITS AND A FAVORABLE US RESPONSE TO VALID COLOMBIAN DEFENSE NEEDS. ANY FURTHER US EFFORTS TO REDUCE FMS CREDITS BELOW MINIMUM ESSENTIAL LEVELS OR TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON PROCUREMENT WHICH ARE PERCEIVED BY COLOMBIANS AS ARBITRARY OR UNREASONABLE, RISK A TERMINATION OF CLOSE COLOMBIAN-US MILITARY RELATIONS IN FAVOR OF A NEW ASSOCIATION WITH THIRD COUNTRY (IES) WHICH ARE MORE SYMPATHETIC TO COLOMBIA'S PERCEIVED NEEDS.

2. THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN THE CAF AND THE US IS A PRODUCT OF MANY YEAR'S EFFORTS. IT HAS RESULTED IN A SITUATION WHERE COLOMBIAN MILITARY ORGANIZATION, EQUIPMENT, DOCTRINE, AND TRAINING ARE PATTERNED AFTER THOSE OF THE US. PARTLY THROUGH THE US MILITARY PRESENCE AND ASSISTANCE (ESPECIALLY THE IMET PROGRAM), MANY DEMOCRATIC VALUES ACCEPTED IN THE US ARE STRENGTHENED WITHIN THE CAF, AND, ARE THUS REINFORCED IN COLOMBIAN SOCIETY. THE FACT THAT THE CAF SUPPORT CIVILIAN, DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS IS CRITICAL FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF COLOMBIA'S FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, UNFORTUNATELY RARE IN THIS REGION. BEFORE ANY CONSIDERATION IS GIVEN TO A REDUCTION IN US MILITARY PRESENCE OR SUPPORT, WE ALSO SHOULD WEIGH CAREFULLY THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIRD-COUNTRY MILITARY PRESENCE OR DEPENDENCE.

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